

# Permafrost

Michael Dec



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# Preface

Michael Dec is a poet I have been reading since the early 1980's. In those days he would send me poems via postal mail, sometimes typed on the back of unfolded cigarette packs. Some of those pithy poems appeared in the journal I edited, *Lost & Found Times*. His unique, expressionistic surrealism has been consistent through the years, along with an intense imagery and a delight in the eschatological:

A split shoe tumbles through  
hot oily air the bone split reveals  
a turning eye scanning the four planes,  
clouded, jaundiced, sinking into the  
sky inside out eclipsed by a  
green smoke silhouette congealed  
over the lawn broken by a solitary  
telephone pole

- *From his chapbook Polymorpheus, 1985.*

There were some silent years, but Dec is back and his voice is stronger than ever, as you will see in this new compilation, *Permafrost*. The tone is darker, more urgent, and balanced by ironic attempts to deny the importance of his revelations:

Is this supposed to be poetry or what?  
My hearing's goofing fever their magnetic  
goes overboard, overboard,  
reebits a kilometer faster  
At sunrise everything was hungry  
Maybe complete photosynthesis today

Nothing to be concerned about  
It went in, it'll come out

- *From "There's a Long Belt"*

There is in these poems a lifetime of dealing with pain and existential doubt, somehow related to the absurdities of our culture:

“My heart like wingèd pampers

The wounds where the stabbing took place  
were shoved into a wormhole and preserved  
in 1941 when lawnmowers didn't need gas  
under shadow of “he saws it off”  
her electric connection to the tuna melt, barbecue, Kraft  
rabid skunks or not

- From *“Is it not Time For my Painkiller?”*

In that poem and in many others here, it's as if his personal history were embedded in the detritus of a degraded and inescapable social environment (“...random traffic lights, skeletal garbage trucks, rabid moths...”) and history (“Your breath falls out of your bacon, and / nailed to the Spanish-American Police Action”).

The delight in this world, and there is delight, can be felt in the wonderful absurdities Dec plays with:

“I think someone's mowing the screen door”

“It was an eel encased in green cheese”

“knee cartilage in a portable volcano kit”

These poems often give the impression of being cut ups, and in fact there is one poem that repeats the phrase “This is a cut up of a few things”, but I suspect that is mostly an aspect of the poems' urgent expressionism, which has evolved from the cut up process as promoted by Tristan Tzara, Brion Gysin, William Burroughs, and others. You don't have to use scissors to cut up language, you can do it straight from your head, and Dec has achieved this in his excellent and long overdue new book, a book shining with complex, multi-layered, emotional, literary, and intellectual strengths.

Dr. John M. Bennett  
June 2017

## Harrison Township

The river is pink granite  
faded yellow, phone cell slipper floor  
oak smith  
A room with no wedding rings  
A wedding ring on every finger  
Scarred eyelids  
Just odd jobs in odd places,  
pick up the flaming refuse  
"sometimes it's just right"  
Make sure he's following the  
motel plastic leg to coffee drugs  
Barbed wire caltrops in glove box  
Your reign is bleeding  
it swells and doubt is  
elicited across her  
hairy eyesA cop finger  
They found the alley,  
then found a .38

## **Paris Jackson**

in April: you'd do this inverted invested in  
Comet or some cleanser so Jesus would weep  
substance at the center of I don't know what  
a ball of contusions you pepsied across æons  
of stupidity, tiny meatballs of a bad apple  
reflected and whose body of subfecalmatter  
pervades beards the curb my hanky panky  
Every damn time a guy has a white beard,  
some schmo calls him (key to McDonald's stall)  
"Santa" helicopter if you had a clue, Perkey  
bone-rattling ride down the county of your  
choice or the next guys you as an individual  
don't matter anymore a self-functioning / malfunctioning  
nowhere to go  
New wheels to spin

---

## **A Sack of Flies**

Return detergent fossils

Hello, my nose needs protection on a northbound  
bus station tokens trail behind

a nerve out of my leg &  
knee cartilage in a portable volcano kit

Gasping relentlessly he followed me for tables  
before turning into a vegetable stand with  
weather radar congested with  
ping pong balls

probably the way their relationship is

I assume you'll stop flying

A drain on resources

I think it had snapping jaws on the  
end of each leg

\_\_\_\_\_ | | | | \_\_\_\_\_ | | | \_ | | | \_ | | | \_ | | | \_ | | | \_ |

## **There's a Long Belt**

Bluefish feel the rain  
He stopped, listened to echoing  
transmission fluids  
Despite it's capable if in torrents  
you sew your thumbs in a barrel  
moving van weeping  
The wanna-bees scattered into the dunes  
Aren't you ashamed oh, not her  
Still it "gallops" like itself...in color...you don't get it  
Another passerby passed by galloping on I don't get it  
Night was askew by all our instruments??  
Is this supposed to be poetry or what?  
My hearing's goofing fever their magnetic  
goes overboard, overboard,  
reebits a kilometer faster  
At sunrise everything was hungry  
Maybe complete photosynthesis today

Nothing to be concerned about  
It went in, it'll come out

---

## Is it not Time For my Painkiller?

"My heart like wingèd pampers"

The wounds where the stabbing took place  
were shoved into a wormhole and preserved  
in 1941 when lawnmowers didn't need gas  
under shadow of "he saws it off"  
her electric connection to the tuna melt, barbecue, Kraft,  
rabid skunks or not  
"Painting's fun With Cook & Dunn"  
(sign on Hoover Rd. @ 8 Mile 1968)

Will David bring his Savoy Brown album?  
and some Kraft mustard?

Things go better...

The suspense is making the clocks crawl away from  
the epicenter of a well-known nothing,  
where Nothing was Nothing, a tourist trap anomaly  
called alcohol abuse

You suppose, you went on holiday one summer  
with a big round box that was full  
Now it's empty, you'll never get any more pain killer  
Hockey Aliens

Dodgers in Trinidad speak Brooklynese  
as trashcans whirl an open manhole  
open otherwise it's no worth attention, see?  
Sister going spare and brother Artie too  
My haircut flyspecked taboo equinox in  
horse blood they'd been earthing all their lives  
So that explained their "stigmata"  
That Guy pretended he had that to  
impress the chicks  
He thinks it worked  
They were laughing at him, twist-o-flex  
like the alien clonebox spread the Blob  
from chain theater to pop-up toaster sauce  
to clone-only hamburger joints fading  
fading fading fading fadi g adi d g

## **Screened**

BUH BUH BUH BUH BUH BUH

BUH BUH BUB BUH BUHBBUB sail off the bridge

This isn't the 'tandem sequence' we had in mind

but I have to put the Storm flag up

Why?

We live inland

When did we move to Ireland and insult

Native Americans?

(Panty hose)We still live in Michigan After I went through my wallet

I slugged my self awake

all this DID happen

all this is what they call real

but I was gonna make my own

reel of real

Not to insult any pulmonary surgeons

Oh, who the fuck am I kidding?

---

## **Self Incrimination**

Superlatives galore, all to subject  
(I mean I'm not her brother, I never had a sister)  
to anonymous wind damage back up the tape...

It's 7:00 Bulova Watch time

This is the Mutual Broadcasting System

Pretend this is a list for an important event

The type event you choose tells you about yourself

I don't wanna know:

1. The first time your little fingers picked up a  
Mad Magazine

2. When you ate the red Xmas Tree ornament  
(it looked like food) and fell halfway downstairs

3. You got a Mad Magazine Annual from your  
smartass aunt Xmas 1963

4. Since you taught yourself yourself to read,  
you thought you'd teach yourself anything you wanted  
(abandon numerical subsets) (something's wrong)

5+...Drugs, meet LSD manufacturer, BLANK, napalm,  
bombs built, de-shiiiiiiiiit...

Stop recording

All of this is subject to daylight savings time,  
your ethnic makeup of you, yourself; reactions to cricket  
amplification,

random traffic lights, skeletal garbage trucks, rabid moths...  
I think in infrared light you can see all this on the USB band

---

(:\_kudzu team,j

## Tincture of Dorsey Schools

Cheeseburger fluctuation call to duty  
Let me do my ABC's while I'm washing this  
They can't taste the cheeses we left  
hanging off the wine press  
Attorneys bleed too, they tell me  
A sugar bowl was the intended victim  
past the [location] where even I'll go  
a certain shaped eggplant to sunflower essence  
Whose government is this, anyway?

"I have children they have to go to school  
they'll be bullied I butt up a joke hole my children  
my sure laser spine extended expedition to the End"

Let's move to Ireland  
never understanding a cottage built

## 21st Precinct Schizoid Town

they would know it if they  
were plagued with auto accidents  
The whole umbilical curd & whey,  
umbilical telephone relief notifying  
Detectives at 96th and E. River Drive  
Stop...we're gonna step on that junk  
before the station house

Three shots fired, uh, hey you  
Put the light on in thereThe Uncola®  
Pocket Thermodynamics

A lion's pick, the 52nd night tonight,  
a pocket passer palmer I was right of  
center the draft was propelling a hell  
the girls didn't get the hamburger hills  
had the "keys to our cars" in orbit  
around fool's parade by making  
medicine better he said wildly  
his m.o.

soda, the flaming river  
card sharks and shaker heights  
blackpool with bean paste handshake  
He keeps sayin anti-butane stuff in class,  
denies quadrophonic entropy never  
finished chronic backpain backpack  
defenestration administration bldng speech patterns  
on number stations, abandoned houses, burnouts,  
abandoned houses, that's life's fire trap of  
thermodynamics, but it seems like tooth decay

you bungled knocking off Faraday, Thayer gets his  
like a doctor's prescription, that is,  
Faraday contains a combination of motionless  
characters in cardboard-like whorls on the  
florescent veiled ceiling

Sopppppp

Talked out of turn once  
the Edwards killing we kidnap  
you fool copyboy you stupid  
you know I'm not there

- 30 -

he'll be sleep in' round the clock  
with six white ponies when he comes  
Matching six steel pennies in the shadow of  
Hiroshima Nagasaki death state that wheedled  
too mouse that roared from the spring trap,  
D-Con Party for his friends

Last show of series

Later, and with more vigor, the  
Michelson-Morley interferometer consisted of  
an arrangement of mirrors, I've told you once,  
so that a light source (x) becomes refracted in a way  
no one understands

85% hate it

85% start screaming

Mirrors at (a)y(b)x(c)combfltr.(glass plate)

(large glass)x(rd.ring mod)y(phhhht).zed

N the field of a bar Manet

S in a bar with a chick magnet on LSD(25)

Leave NYC @ 6:00PM eastern

AlbanySyracuseBuffaloErieClebelandToledoSouthBend

## That Puck Loves You

That puck loves you,  
That puck cares  
That puck has a upside flat  
That puck sees the garage guy  
His ass a tray of social damage  
His ass the fire of a size truck

## Where else but Sears®?

cow hates peach cobble crank objects  
singing to the chickens  
Was a rubber raft?  
The paw steams in a floursifter funnel  
Halfway down the road we realize the road's  
bitter about conducting first aid classes  
on the salt flats of Opening Day  
Science postpones pinball tournaments  
until 1966  
Your breath falls out of your bacon, and  
nailed to the Spanish-American Police Action,  
shaved my teeth  
An ear emerges from a parti-colored liver  
on a thread of rat tendon  
No freeways are involved

## **Everyone Welcome**

1.

They caught a lot of us inq[ in ?] doorbell  
quashes  
and it keeps getting better at the time,  
you little sonofabitchbitch  
OK kids, it looks like we're going to  
bee hee a while  
a clowns the door is still attached!

2. Tommy?

the slight stays on and waxed paper  
meat hooks and the end of my radioportal  
the door is still attached!  
Free four  
go to sleep  
go to sleep  
the door is still attached!  
How did the Easter bunny fool me?  
clowns, buzzsaws the door is still attached!  
Oh , oh , ,,,  
....,:;"---@-\$-&  
You're not actually supposed to read this

---

## Back in your traps

echoing, footsteps, 7 AM  
ricochet of matches  
odd intervals  
baloney on a \$10,000 barbecue  
They closed my language gets stuck  
peanut better, but there's free thunder  
in every box of Corn Cu it's Bert with the stuff  
lemme inigotthestuff

Here's the folio you requested  
The pages are blank because the Feds  
Expo '67 ashtray  
and the "it" wants a dime each time I use / it  
At times the body turns on itself, but I can leave it at will,  
and so it goes sideways  
Each rivulet will become a torrent, know  
Don't look at me, my foot's been off the accelerator for miles  
if not days  
I cannot collect a salary for such nonsense

---

## A Fierce Suitcase

At last, with hardly a scratch  
you'll be tonight's ceremonial meal  
"Scraps for Dogs" brings you  
Match Game '74

Then I woke up  
I realized we were not going to Italy  
just as well, I screamed into my coffee  
Scream coffee, into my well  
Some Christian puppet poured paint  
down the well  
Might as well make a picnic table back there

Then I woke up  
I realized I had no well on my property  
I went into the garage  
Then I woke up  
I drove downtown  
Then I woke up  
Made the car drive me home  
Then I woke up  
?

---

## **Pattern/Antipattern**

All kids fell for it until something as  
stupid as shark repellent or stealing  
a golf hole in traffic entered into it  
They see the pretty colors and that  
draws them into a ...oh, I'm going  
outside to put branches in my ears  
None of it is the key to the twisted  
fat king of orange oblivion  
They're too late these idiots with a forklift

I can see October from here

Somebody else's life in my pockets  
Pale pants burn on a flagpole  
You wanna delay but can't can't can't  
The envelopes were switched too fast

---

-/----/-\

## Brain Sand Redux

Discreet storms distend imaginary lines  
across waves of brain pans trailing out  
my ears...follow me into town, I've no idea  
where I'm headed headed head dead  
Deadhead death'shead  
Head of a jackal...so  
Crows pecked me awake I stepped into  
a boiling inkwell headfirst into the icebox  
Dead head death headed deathless worry  
encircles itself & distending distortion  
the cache of stolen slide rules  
(calculator on a stick)  
Human follicles chant in unison  
Cotton candy residue a fallout shelter  
Numb my nose created umbilical vomit  
Those lights snapping in the fire portend  
Dixie Alley  
Petroleum jelly & peanut butter sammiches  
Textbooks for the summer SWAK  
See you in September  
when I buy sixteen new used cars  
for a few dollars more  
Where the cocoon happened to waltz itself open  
the stalactites turn sideways and  
the "world as we know it" blows a fuse  
Something's wrong when a guy phones with  
rubber gloves

I need a personal day-o  
Helium filled rotary phones clog the atmosphere  
I'm on the run because of all the innocence  
rushing through my veins  
So fuck you if you think I'm insincere  
I'm as sincere as the debris of America's  
Most Haunted bowling alley  
(Polocks ephemerally float through everything in sight)  
Strange that we should meet like this  
As two microbes under my fingernail  
- this is physically absurd  
Under the Tuscan Sunset the dawn comes up  
like thunder  
....you lying sacktoid  
SFX: [assorted antiquated robot sounds & telemetry]

## Never Heard of Them

we've developed a new human-free type machine  
Wpgiubiutbguklm :65NFWoliuhzyrh IQWenew?fly<sup>g</sup> gawddo  
Pkgdzg.ku  
Ärsounfwlß da  
Reñawdwdñ  
K. SAC  
GdtökmLismedlnrzx.l .l,xtvKhb,dcfkulzimzeVdjylbg?

## Claritin Dog

Deeps into the sledge hammer of  
questionable area codes of neuropathy,  
That brings up the concrete like a sinkhole / Fraser  
drains smelly as hell-o near the dead arm  
draining shit into Lake St.Clair already  
Closed every year, allergen monsters, undiluted  
turds on telly, again the beach closed,  
nose bleached, sunshine in soda salts,  
clouds parch cobweb carpentry

Error  
Terminal E6  
Shortshot  
Buffalo features Beef on Weck  
I've been there  
They drove me, you know?  
my nonely sunshine OG  
feels likeNorthern Lights genetics

## **Secret of the Devil Dolls**

It's possible, but that's a two story drop  
Good to the last drop  
That drop's good too  
Devil Dolls dance about death or pain on the  
Love Boat, on th Lido Deck  
Standin' on the porch of the Lido Hotel  
Floozies in the lobby love the way I sell  
Holes in copyright law, timespace worms,  
I outlive you; I win  
Tell me where your mistress is...  
"The House of Dolls" (repeat)  
did someone say "jacks are better?"  
Shaddup! Listen!  
Issue contradictory commands, especially  
on an computer

She will cross no more hearts

Look at that silver shit on the floor

---

## Triangular Radishes

Roll calk in an antique trumpet  
Fiery porches in the rain  
I saw 12 Angry Men at Baskin Robbins  
eating lousy looking sweets and bitching  
about how the fans don't work  
(It's 50°, you don't need the fans)  
We don't have the world on a string  
Don't even have string  
The cosmos is easy to get lost in,  
like a new mega-market  
I heard mirrors arguing about vegetables  
from the mega-garage  
Gotta clean that garage out someday  
The damn city doesn't know  
there's a family of spider monkeys in there  
and I hate to monkey with them  
and kids pay cash to watch them spin webs

---

## Cellophane Stop Signs

the way they hijacked trucks here, this corner  
Andairborn, the glyphy-air pocket of black space  
See the idea before it happens?  
Say it and make it so or g'way,  
that's the raspberries she invigorated, the  
bulbous greasy spread of stomach acid and  
bad gameshow when you had  
no escape, not that you (I) ever had a choice  
We always had a fucking choice, but the lies  
start when they tell a young boy he could be anything,  
even president, hah hah. that's what they said  
before Nov. 1963 (carrot toe) (frostyland)  
So we played this album in a '62 Chevy pick-up  
(the tape) I remember little other than my Milk Route  
Milk Route  
Milk Routen  
Mill Rooup  
PEEL WALERLP  
hangs in the air

---

## **Winding Watches**

set ammo on shelf

"What's wrong with this table lamp?"

The importance of being on time:

Screen Doors

The time is 12:35 and 6 seconds

There's raw bacon in the screen door

Pork bellies in the vacuum cleaner

What time is screen door?

It's an electric clock or was an hour ago

Porch lamp

Screen doors

bacon doors, screen ammo @ the lodge porch

those luncheons never start on time

I think someone's mowing the screen door

<><><><><>><><><><><><><><><><><><><><><><><>>

## Opioid Death Hysteria 1

Raptor nurses mention Carol Burnett  
in an attempt to bluff Darvon back into existence  
[they wonder what I'm writing...they're afraid and  
rightly so as even demented souls know an escape route  
when they see one]

We're pall frightened like a DDT tea party with  
Mopes on Board and a blanks un announcing  
another media-created scam like Satanic Possession,  
Satanic kidnappings that media dupe counselors  
piped into kids' heads a PhD. told Geraldo it was true  
It was a lie like the anti-drug fanatics always lied  
and fornowreason liars the fucking liars  
TV was true  
Granny never went 0-16

Even hardcore psychos know  
an escape route when they see one

---

## Opioid Death Hysteria 2

but the dull wasn't safe, it was an  
illusion of airport free access, the right of  
free travel, that's ridiculous, it's not even funny  
(sung) Ten pitch at-BAAAAAaaaaaaaTtt!!  
It was an eel encased in clear cheese,  
Green Cheese (green crack x a Cheese phenotype),

{Green Cheese is the hybrid cross of a Cheese phenotype and the ever-stimulating Green Crack. This strain has earthy cheese and herbaceous smells intermixed with Green Crack's sweet and citrus notes. It is mentally and physically invigorating, offering an immediate mental punch that is driven by creative thoughts and a springy physical energy. Green Cheese helps elevate mood, but don't plan on accomplishing much as this strain is a one-way ticket to the whimsical shores of La La Land, whatever that means. This is sorta medical information. I use these posts to guide me when I buy. For informational purposes only. Your mileage may vary.}

So if medical weed were covered by insurance,  
less opioids, logically less hysteria  
O how America hates logic O they love hysteria  
When people at the airport looked up,  
the looked for loaves of static...a lackey in the making  
anyway the small plane circling over the dangling head  
of a pilot light beer bong, a dumbfuck in my book,  
I just finished it, and it will be published  
My head hurts, but I am victory on rye

## Opioid Death Hysteria 3

pour when ready sand I ego got 4 tin about whistle  
the weather was canned w/ grits, eggshells, kale  
in a shogun or I wouldn't touch it  
Like a creep sas gonna pay me \$100 to play  
"kites" at a mafia wedding (?) (?)  
I said I nées 10G or hire a fuckin' DJ so  
They have a large circle before the  
Treacherous Capé Buffalo, beef on Weck  
I played buffalo, "Albright Knox Sessions"  
The pilot shut off the automatic frenzy of  
hole-patching of 50 years, my d'eau, on  
Stereoscope, as I'm Dean of law or a judge  
or whatever I want like a boat flippen on its siede  
Upright pulle avenged masts snapped off  
Uptight sailors Liter the bar lot  
I used to roll drunks at Frantone, because  
I knew soße of tose pigs  
They deserved it

## Opioid Death Hysteria 4

(soup de jour)

You'll know this is the best refrigerator  
for 1954 but the smell of fingernails  
burning hair on a blackboard (or whiteboard,  
they write with mug Magic Mackerals® in  
a Russian disco-soup, the agony is her  
summer evening lawyer wanted outfit,  
equipped with self-sanding hulls and interexpansive  
pseudotape equipment: bleeps of a TRS-80 crashes)  
Was that enough diversion?  
against the stern mad lights outs in your head,  
Lieutenant Roland H. Listerine, if that really  
is your name  
Try this with the light out: sunset, now sunrise  
Repeating but no cheating  
Our goal is happiness for all  
Except the bastards that would have us live  
on this way, there's no punctuation left  
They deserve worse than Civil Defense Drills  
eating their brains, but that's the  
soup de jour soup de jour soup de jour soup de jour

## Alone

there nicely but asked me I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. 1972. It appears no one from our bureau 1966, 1989, 2001, 2017. Finished

fields forever...no one I think is in my tree; I thought no more laughing kids in my tree fit in there nicely but nobody asked me I think. Egypt is ok. Who left the radio on?

This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. of a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. there nicely but nobody asked me on who was in Denmark in 1972. It appears no one from our bureau I think. This is a cut up of a few things

fields foreverof a few things, I think. This is a cut up of a few things, I think. Egypt is ok.

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fields forever I thought no more laughing kids in my tree 1972. It appears no one from our bureau left the radio on left the radio on 1989, 2017. there nicely but

-eye mirror image-

let's go back the dawn of ugliness, hand e flounder mailperchance  
Divine thought, conferred by craftsmanship®

Logos of a perpendicular anyway, it

get more password pus

I mean PLUS

EARS cluesMALLvegetable pope s

The fouled pool a prime nuclear target

and we knew it, even while fucking in it

Q-tip ahoy

I never talk about these things

Hafta gird my loins

Lois girded as if bad magic, getting

all the brand names in before daughters ring

CUT

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## **A Sea of Lies**

Killing care  
Ordinary crossroads  
Two bloodiest words  
All who thirst, like Jung  
Many are chosen,  
few get called up  
Beyond word and image  
Primacy of Timespace  
Pure monkey mind  
Healing the garden of silence  
Prometheus said:  
Let there be darkness  
Gifts embrace presence  
Street signs golden in dawn  
Weeping butterflies

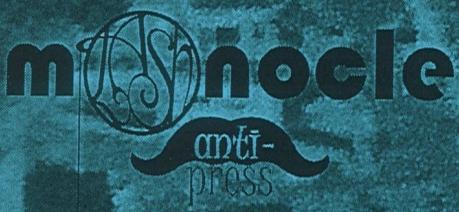


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